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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ἡ δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ αἰὶν ἡ ἀνθρώπων, ἀγρυπνῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

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UNDESIGNED TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS AGAINST THE CORRUPTIONS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.

In discussing the various points of difference between us and the Church of Rome, we have examined fully, as occasion required, the evidence furnished by the early Fathers on the questions at issue. The Reformers, and especially those of the Church of England, have from the very first insisted on this branch of the argument against Romanism. They have not contented themselves, as they might have done, with appealing to the testimony of the Scriptures, positive and negative, direct and indirect, express and implied, against the innovations and corruptions with which the Romish system has overlaid the pure doctrine once committed to the saints; but they have met the champions of Rome on their own ground, and shown that ecclesiastical antiquity is altogether opposed to the dogmas of the Council of Trent and the creed of Pope Pius IV. Following the example of the Reformers, the CATHOLIC LAYMAN has laid before its readers, fully and fairly, those statements of the Fathers which can in any way be brought to bear on the great controversy, to the discussion of which its pages have been for a period of nearly seven years devoted. To the immense mass of patristic evidence therein exhibited very little of any real importance remains to be added. There are, however, an endless variety of aspects under which that evidence may be viewed, and an infinite number of inferences may be drawn from it, all tending to establish the same grand conclusion, viz., that modern Romanism is not to be found in the records of primitive Christian antiquity, but dates its origin from a period when ignorance and superstition and interested priestcraft conspired to mar the simplicity and corrupt the purity of the religion of Christ and His Apostles. Our object in the present article is to point out one of these special aspects under which the testimony of the early Fathers may be regarded, and to which some of our readers have, perhaps, not given as much attention as its importance plainly deserves.

Every one who is at all familiar with the nature of historical evidence is aware that, in many cases, the most decisive testimony respecting some disputed fact or state of opinion at a certain period is furnished, not by the direct and positive statement of a contemporary writer, but by an undesigned allusion or casual remark of one who is engaged with describing something else not immediately or perhaps at all connected with the matter in question, or with settling some other dispute of quite a different nature. Such evidence, being delivered by him without his having any idea of the use his words might be made to serve, in entire simplicity and unconsciousness, is, it is needless to observe, of the highest value and importance.

Now, in the Romish controversy, many instances of this undesigned and unconscious testimony occur. The sentiments of the primitive Church respecting the great questions which are agitated between Protestants and Roman Catholics are in many, perhaps in most, cases best ascertained by the indirect allusions and casual expressions which occur in the writings of the early Fathers. In some cases, indeed, we search in vain for any direct and express statements respecting the doctrines which the Church of

Rome asserts to have been held from the earliest ages of Christianity. We account for the absence of such explicit statements on the ground that the doctrines in question were then unknown, and, consequently, could not be formally asserted or denied by the writers of those times. But even where there is a want of direct testimony on the part of the early Fathers respecting the doctrines in question, we meet in their writings with statements and phrases which are quite irreconcilable with the notion that such doctrines were held by the Church at large or believed by themselves; and this amounts to a proof quite as complete and decisive as the most formal disclaimer could furnish.

We proceed next to give some examples of the application of the general principle of patristic interpretation to which we have just referred.

We take for our first illustration the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Amongst the extant writings of Irenæus, the celebrated Bishop of Lyons in the second century, there is a fragment,* of which the following is a translation:—"The Greeks seizing the slaves of the Christian catechumens, used force to extort from them the disclosure of some secret abomination of the Christians: these slaves having nothing to tell which would gratify their tormentors, except that they heard their master say the Holy Communion was the blood and body of Christ, thinking it was really his blood and flesh" (i.e., making this mistake), reported the same to the inquisitors. Accordingly, the latter, supposing that the Christians actually celebrated this mystery² (i.e., under this wrong impression), made the same report to the rest of the Greeks, and forced the martyrs Sanctus and Blandina by torture to make a confession. To whom Blandina made answer well and boldly, 'How could they endure to do such an act, who, in the practice of religious discipline, abstain even from permitted food.'³

Now, we ask, is it possible that such a passage as this could have been penned by Irenæus, if the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or the corporal presence in any form, had been the doctrine of the Church at that time? For, had it been so, it would have been really the physical body and blood of Christ which Christians professed to partake of; and the slaves would have been perfectly correct in the information they gave the Greeks; and there would have been no room for Irenæus to explain the circumstance under which the misapprehension of the Greeks, prompted by that of the slaves, occurred, because there would have been no misapprehension at all by either party. Surely, we are right in regarding this to be more decisive of the question of the bodily presence than any express repudiation of it by Irenæus would have been. A simple repudiation would merely amount to a statement that it was not actually held by the Church; but would imply no opinion as to its absurdity. Whereas Irenæus plainly expresses his wonder that it could ever have entered into the head of the slaves to imagine such a thing; and he manifestly ascribes it to the dulness of apprehension which naturally belonged to that degraded class of persons.

Cyprian, the famous Bishop of Carthage, who flourished in the third century, furnishes us with another example of the same kind. In a letter⁴ addressed by him to Cæcilius, Cyprian contends against the practice of certain heretics or innovators, who, in celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, made use of water only, instead of water and wine mixed, as was the ordinary custom of the Church, at that time. "Since," he argues, "Christ said, I am the true vine, the blood of Christ is not water, but wine. Nor can His blood, by which we are redeemed and quickened, seem to be in the cup, when there is no wine in the cup, by which Christ's blood is represented."⁵ And again in the same epistle: "For as Christ bare us all, since He bare our sins, we perceive that the people is understood by the water, but that the blood of Christ is represented by the wine."⁶ The word represented (*ostendit*)

* Irenæus, Fragment xlii., p. 343, Bened. edit.

² *νομιζαντες τῷ ὄντι αἷμα καὶ σάρκα εἶναι.*

³ *λαβόντες ὡς αὐτοῦ ἄρτομα τοῦτο τελεῖσθαι Χριστιανοί.*

⁴ Cyprian, epist. lxi., p. 248; Ben. Ed., Venet., 1758.

⁵ "Nec potest videtur sanguis ejus, quo redempti et vivificati sumus, esse in calice quando vinum desit calicis, quo Christi sanguis ostenditur."—Sec. 2.

⁶ "Nam quia nos omnes portabat Christus, qui et peccata nostra portabat, videmus in aqua populum intelligi, in vino vero ostendit sanguinem Christi."—Sec. 13, p. 256.

in the latter clause clearly corresponds to the word "understood" (*intelligi*) in the former, showing that the element in either case is used figuratively. And to make the matter still more clear, Cyprian having quoted a well-known text in the epistle to the Galatians (ch. i. 8), adds, "Since, therefore, neither the Apostle himself, nor an angel from heaven, could preach any other doctrine than that which Christ and His Apostles preached once for all, I marvel more than a little, whence it could come to pass, that in some places, contrary to the evangelical and apostolical discipline, water should be offered in the Lord's cup, when water alone cannot possibly express the blood of Christ;"⁷ evidently implying that wine did express that blood, not that it was the blood itself.

Here the evidence against the doctrine of Transubstantiation is furnished us, not by any explicit discussion of the subject, but incidentally, whilst the writer is engaged with settling a controversy of quite a different kind; but still that evidence is just as decisive as if Cyprian had been speaking directly and explicitly on the doctrine of Transubstantiation; nay, much more decisive, because it is just as much to the purpose, and yet delivered by him in entire unconsciousness of the inference that might be drawn from his words. There is another passage in Cyprian (Ep. 76) to the same purport: "When the Lord calls (vocat) the bread His body, made up as that bread is of many grains, He indicates that our people, whom He bare, were to be united; and when He calls (appellat) the wine His blood, made up as that wine is from many berries of the grape, He signifies that our flock is composed of an united multitude" (p. 363). The use of such terms as these is plainly inconsistent with the existence of a belief in Transubstantiation in the mind of the writer who employs them.

Tertullian, another eminent writer at the close of the second century, supplies us with a third example to the same effect. He wrote a treatise against a heretic called Marcion, who, to account for the origin of evil, and the admixture of it with good which prevails in the world, devised the hypothesis of two gods; the one inferior, the other supreme. The former, according to him, is the author of evil, and created the world; the latter is the source of all good, and was unknown till Christ revealed Him. "You affect," says Tertullian, addressing Marcion in the Treatise above referred to,⁸ "to despise the world in which you live; and notwithstanding the innumerable instances of skill and contrivance which it exhibits on every side, you represent it as altogether unworthy to be regarded as the work of the Supreme Being. Yet Christ, whom you suppose to have been sent to deliver man from the power of the evil Principle (or Demiurge), has been content to allow the use of the elements and productions of this vile world even in the sacraments which He has instituted. He did not reprobate the water, for He washes His disciples with it; nor the oil, for with that He anoints them; nor the mixture of milk and honey, with which He feeds them [these were all used in the rite of Baptism, as then administered]; nor the bread with which He represents His own very body" (in the Eucharist). Here the Eucharistic bread represents (representat) the very body of Christ, but does not become that very body. In another book of the same treatise against Marcion, Tertullian is engaged in proving that Marcion is wrong in supposing that the God of the Law is not identical with the God of the Gospel, inasmuch as it is the same Christ who is foretold and typified in the one, revealed and realized in the other. With this view he compares the passover of Moses and the passover of Christ. It was on the day of the Passover that Christ died; He might have chosen another day; but it had been designated in the Old Testament as the Lord's Passover; therefore did the Lord desire with a great desire to eat it with His disciples. "Professing, therefore, this great desire to eat the Passover as His own—and it would have been unworthy of Him, who was God, to desire that which was another's—He made the bread, which He took and gave to His disciples, His own body, by saying, 'This is My body'—that is, the figure of My body; for it would not have been a figure, unless it had been a veritable body, for a vacancy or phan-

⁷ "Quæ sola Christi sanguinem non possit exprimere."—P. 254.

⁸ Tertullian, adv. Marcion, lib. i., cc. xlii. xlv., p. 439-40; Rigalt, 1634.

⁹ "Quo ipsum corpus suum representat."—Adv. Marc. i. c. xiv.

¹⁰ Id est figura corporis mei.—Adv. Marc. lib. iv., c. xi., p. 571.

tasm cannot take a figure."* Here Tertullian distinctly asserts that the Eucharistic bread is the figure of Christ's actual body, not that body itself, and so, while engaged in a totally different controversy, testifies in the most decisive manner against the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Again, in the third book of the same treatise, arguing against Marcion's notion that Christ's body was not real, Tertullian appeals to the evidence of the senses, contending that Christ's reality "was attested by three of them, the sight, the touch, and the hearing."¹ This would have been very inconclusive reasoning if Marcion could have turned upon him and said, as he might have done if the doctrine of Transubstantiation were then held by the Church, "The bread and wine of the Eucharist are also attested by three of the senses, and yet you do not believe them to be really present in it." Here, again, the actual matter in dispute was something quite different from the doctrine of Transubstantiation; and yet we gather from Tertullian's words clear incidental evidence against that doctrine.

It would not be difficult to multiply proofs of the same kind against the doctrine of Transubstantiation. But our space at present forbids it; and we shall conclude this subject with just glancing at the evidence supplied by Justin Martyr, who wrote about the middle of the second century. He speaks (Dialog. § 117) of the elements in the Eucharist as food, liquid and solid; as memorials of Christ's body and blood (§ 70); and as oblations of fruits of the earth (§ 41).

As a second illustration of our general principle let us take the *Worship of Images*.

There is no tract of any early Father, which, from its title, would lead us to expect any reference to this question of image worship; nor do we find anything expressly and directly said about it by the writers of the Primitive Church. Still, we can indirectly avail ourselves of their testimony. For instance, we learn from the Apologies that one of the accusations most commonly brought against the Christians by the heathens was that they were atheists. To this charge Justin Martyr replies at length in his first Apology (§§ 6, 13), and so does Athenagoras in his *Legatio pro Christianis* (§ 10).² The language employed by the latter evidently implies that no such thing as image worship was then known. "I have made it appear," he says, "clearly enough that we are not atheists, accounting, as we do, God to be one, uncreated, everlasting, invisible, impassive, incomprehensible, incapable of being contained within space, comprehended by the mind and reason alone, encompassed with light, and beauty, and spirit, and unutterable power, by whom the universe was created, and set in order, and through whose word it is preserved." The very wording of the defence suggests the real ground of the accusation, namely, that atheism was imputed to the Christians because no images of their gods were to be found in their churches; and, therefore, the heathens supposed that they had no god: a supposition which the apologists endeavour to set aside by showing that their god was invisible, and otherwise of a nature not to be represented by a material image. Indeed, it is their boast, as Origen says, that the meanest and least instructed of the Christians could not be brought to believe that the Deity could be expressed by symbols wrought by the hands of base mechanics; herein proving themselves superior even to the philosophers of the heathen.³ This conclusion is corroborated by another consideration. We learn from Tertullian that the Christians were actually charged with worshipping the cross.⁴ To this he replies, as is not unusual with him, by an argumentum ad hominem. Minucius Felix, who also adverts to it,⁵ retorts it after the manner of Tertullian, though he denies it too.⁶ But whence did the charge originate, except from the cross being the only symbol which the heathens could detect, either within or without the churches, for which the Christians seemed to show any reverence. Had they seen images in the Christian churches, is it conceivable that they would have confined their notice to the cross?

There is also a striking passage in Irenæus, which furnishes us with evidence of the same indirect kind. Speaking of a certain sect of heretics, the followers of Carpocrates, he says, "They call themselves Gnostics, and adopt pictures and images of Christ, alleging that the original was made by Pilate, at the time when Jesus was among men. These they crown with chaplets, and expose them among the figures of the philosophers of this world, such as Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the rest, treating them with the same kind of reverence as the heathens express for their images."⁷ If the Church of Irenæus's day had been in the habit of presenting pictures and images of the Saviour to the devotions of the people, it is impossible to believe that he would have penned a paragraph like this.

We shall adduce one or two passages from Origen, which plainly, though indirectly, prove that image worship was unknown in the Church of his age. In his treatise on prayer he says, "He who is no hypocrite strips

himself of everything which is adventitious and not his own, . . . and regarding nothing without, and longing for nothing without, and shutting every door of the senses, that he may not be drawn away by them, and that no image of sensible things may get admission into his mind, he prays to the Father, &c."⁸ And in another of his works he thus writes, "Though buffeted by the world, we have learned not to faint or to forfeit our love of the God of the universe in Jesus Christ." Moreover, we distinctly avow our origin, and the dignity thereof, since that we impress upon our converts in the very first instance a contempt for idols and for all images; and elevating their thoughts from serving the creature instead of God, we lead them up to Him who created all things."⁹ Again, "Besides, our faith conspires with the dictates of common sense; as, for example, however perverted custom may have put it into the minds of men, that images are gods, and that objects made of gold, silver, ivory, are worthy of worship, still common sense requires us to believe that perishable matter cannot be God; nor can God be shaped out of senseless blocks, as if they could in any way represent Him."¹⁰ The evasion has, indeed, been pleaded that Origen did not mean to condemn the use of images as incentives to devotion, but only as objects of worship. But the following passage, amongst others, is quite sufficient to refute such an idea—"God, therefore, chose the foolish things of the world—the most simple of the Christians, who had lives more pure and moderate than most of the philosophers—to confound the wise, who do not blush to converse with senseless things as gods, or images of gods. For who that has any understanding would not laugh at him, who, after so many fine philosophical speeches about God or the gods, fixes his eye on their images, and either puts up his prayers to them, or by means of the sight of them carries his thoughts up to the ideal Being, to whom, as he pictures to himself, they must needs ascend from the visible and symbolical figure."¹¹

Our last illustration shall be, *Prayers in an unknown tongue*.

That the idea of having public prayer and the administration of the sacraments conducted in a language not understood by the people never entered the heads of the early Fathers is sufficiently proved by the following statements of Origen in his work against Celsus. He is defending the language of Scripture against Celsus, who describes many of its maxims as not only common to the Greeks, but as having been better expressed by them. "If a Greek," Origen says, "desired to assist those who spoke Egyptian or Syriac by sound teaching, he would first take care to learn the dialects of those who were to be his hearers; and, as the Greeks say, would rather barbarize his own tongue for the sake of improving the Egyptians and Syrians, than be a Greek, and speak in a manner that would be useless to Egyptians and Syrians: so Divine Providence having respect not merely to Greeks of education, but to all others, condescended to the boorishness of the mass of hearers, in order that, making use of such language as they were accustomed to, it might provoke the multitude to listen; who, after this introduction, would be able to advance from the simple element to the comprehension of the deeper meanings which Scripture contained."¹² Again, in another passage even still more to the point, Celsus having imputed to the Christians, whom he confounds with some other class of worshippers, a practice of invoking angels by certain barbarous names, and so acquiring favour with them, Origen replies, "Be assured that the Christians do not universally use in their prayers even the words which are found in the Holy Scriptures, and are of God's appointment; but the Greeks use Grecian words, and the Romans Roman words, and thus each prays to God in his own language, and praises Him according to his power. And He who is Lord of all languages hears those who pray in all languages, as though He heard, if I may so express myself, only one and the same voice uttering its meanings in many tongues."¹³ This is an indirect but a most complete proof that the Church of Origen's day did not hold that Public Prayers ought to be said in a tongue unknown to the people.

The instances already adduced will serve to illustrate the point to which we desire to direct the special attention of our readers. It is one of very great importance, and admits of endless applications in the great controversy in which we are engaged. When a witness, speaking on one subject, makes statements which, wholly unconsciously to himself, bear upon and illustrate another, his evidence, being undesigned, is justly regarded as most valuable. Such witnesses are the Fathers, in reference to most of the points at issue between the Reformers and the Church of Rome.

THE GRANDMOTHER OF GOD.

THE London papers lately, in their accounts of the progress of the Emperor of the French through his provinces, make mention of his visit to a shrine of St. Anne in Brittany, and publish a portion of the hymn sung on the occasion in honour of that saint, who, having been the mother of the Virgin Mary, is addressed in the hymn as grandmother of God. We were really ignorant whether

or not such a title was in common use in this country, or whether it would seem to the ears of Irish Roman Catholics as revolting as it did to ours. We are inclined to believe that Irish Roman Catholics are not yet prepared to accept such an appellation, and we ground our belief on the following circumstance. It would seem that the same hymn which had attracted our attention was copied into the *Cork Constitution*; for we lately saw a number of that paper, in which a correspondent (we presume a Roman Catholic) writes very angrily, accusing the editor of irreverence to the Virgin Mary, and of ignorance as well, in translating the French words, which the writer assumes to have been "grande mère de Dieu," grandmother of God, instead of, as they ought to have been, great mother of God. The editor declined to take any responsibility in the matter, the translation not having been any work of his, but copied, as we said, from one of the London papers. But if the editor had been so disposed, he could have had no difficulty in showing that it was his correspondent and not he who had been guilty of a blunder. In fact, if this correspondent had not been too angry to look at the matter carefully, he would have seen that the hymn in question was addressed, not to the Virgin Mary, but to St. Anne. And he must have known that St. Anne could not possibly have been addressed as the great mother of God—a title to which she had no manner of claim, though the title grandmother of God is one which, on Roman Catholic principles, is fully her right. The Roman Catholic correspondent of the *Cork Constitution* felt, no doubt, as any man's natural reason would tell him, that such a phrase as God's grandmother is absurd and blasphemous, and he imagined that to represent those of his faith as using such a title could only be a deliberate attempt to cover his creed with ridicule. But what is really absurd and ridiculous requires no unfair caricature to make it appear so. The best way of exposing those who are really guilty of absurdity is, if it is possible, to hold a mirror up to them and make them see themselves precisely as they are.

Now, this is simply what has been done in the present case. For how do Roman Catholics justify their use of the phrase mother of God except by relying on the truth that the Virgin Mary was mother of Jesus Christ, who is God. But Jesus in His human nature had not only a mother, but also a grandmother and a grandfather, great grandmothers and grandfathers, nephews, nieces, and so on. Whatever reason there is for using the phrase, God's mother, there is precisely the same for speaking of God's grandmother and grandfather, God's great grandfather and great grandmother, God's nephews and nieces, and other relatives. No reasonable man, then, can suppose that any one is trying to cast unfair ridicule on Roman Catholics by representing them as speaking of "God's grandmother." We have no reason to doubt that the newspapers are correct in saying that the phrase was used in France the other day, for it is one which, on Roman Catholic principles, ought to be used; and we have no doubt that if the question were formally proposed to the leading divines of the Roman Catholic Church, they would declare in favour of the strict orthodoxy of the title.

But we appeal from them to men's natural sense and reason. It is impossible not to feel that such an expression as God's grandmother is absurd and blasphemous, and that if the use of the title, grandmother of God, is a logical consequence of the use of the title, mother of God, the one is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the other. The same absurdity and blasphemy is contained in both, though, from constant repetition, men's ears are blunted to it in the latter case. The truth is, that it is an impropriety of language to apply to the Divine nature of our Lord epithets which are true of His human nature only. As God, our blessed Lord existed from all eternity; as man, He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, and He died on the cross a death of shame. But though Jesus died and was born, it is impossible that God can have beginning of days or end of life. There was a time, however, in which the orthodox made it a point to avoid strict accuracy of language in this matter, and applied, indiscriminately, to either nature phrases or expressions in strict propriety only applicable to the other. The reason of this was the rise of a sect of heretics called Nestorians, who separated our blessed Lord into two persons, and who taught that Jesus, who was born and died, was not the same Person as the eternal God who resided in Him. In opposition to these the orthodox took pleasure in using language which should most plainly indicate the opposite sentiments, and spoke of God being born, God dying, &c. It was then, too, that the word Theotokos first came into use—a word, however, which, in a former number, we showed is by no means the equivalent of the modern phrase, mother of God (see CATHOLIC LAYMAN, vol. vi., p. 65). The history of this controversy shows how the safeguards provided against one form of error may, if care be not taken, lead to error of a different kind, after the error against which they were originally designed had died away. So it has been here, and epithets such as Theotokos have been used for the exaltation of a creature, the original intention of which was only to declare the majesty which our blessed Lord, in His one person, is entitled to claim.

It is not merely with respect to the title applied to St. Anne that the hymn which has given rise to this article appears to us worthy of attention. For it may, possibly,

* Tertullian here refers to the denial by Marcion of the reality of Christ's flesh: this he was compelled to deny, because if he admitted it he should also admit the reality of his birth, and consequently his connexion with the Demiurge, the author of the human body or flesh.

¹ Adv. Marc. 3, c. 12.

² Athenagoras wrote towards the end of the second century.

³ Origen, *confr. Celsum*, vi., sec. 14, et alib.

⁴ Tertullian, *Apol.* c. xvi.

⁵ Min. Fel. *Octav.* c. xii.

⁶ C. xxix.

⁷ Irenæus, l. c. xxy. sec. 6, p. 105, Ben. Ed.

⁸ Origen, *de oratione*, sec. 20.

⁹ *Contra Celsum*, iii., sec. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, sec. 40.

¹¹ *Ibid.* vi., sec. 44.

¹² Origen, *Contra Celsum*, vii., sec. 60.

¹³ *Ibid.* viii., sec. 37.